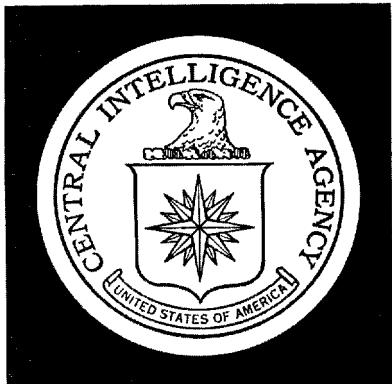


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Central Intelligence Bulletin

CONTENTS

South Vietnam: Situation report. (Page 1)

Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek leadership is embroiled in its most serious political crisis since the invasion. (Page 2)

25X1

India-Pakistan: Indian leaders have expressed a policy of noninterference despite their concern over developments in Pakistan. (Page 5)

Somali Republic: The Somali Youth League continues to control the National Assembly as expected following elections. (Page 6)

Latin America: Preparatory meetings to formulate a common position on trade and development are underway. (Page 7)

Syria: Baathist reorganization (Page 8)

Iran: Fire loss slight (Page 8)

Chile: Students (Page 8)

SECRET

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C South Vietnam: The Communists again conducted widespread harassing shellings against allied positions on 1-2 April, but the level of enemy activity remained low.

Heavy losses were inflicted on enemy forces in a few significant ground actions, however. Northwest of Saigon some 49 enemy troops were reported killed in an abortive assault against a US Army position. South Korean forces reportedly killed 113 Communists in a sharp battle in Ninh Thuan Province and South Vietnamese troops inflicted similar casualties on Viet Cong units in a series of engagements in the Mekong Delta.

There are some signs that the Communists are trying to prolong the current offensive by rotating forces in and out of active combat zones. Northwest of Saigon, for example, prisoners say that the North Vietnamese 141st Regiment has withdrawn to a base area and been replaced in the vicinity of the Michelin Plantation by elements from the North Vietnamese 165th Regiment.

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Czechoslovakia: The Dubcek leadership is embroiled in its most serious political crisis since the invasion as a result of anti-Soviet demonstrations over the weekend.

The central government in Prague threatened on 2 April to impose pre-censorship on those publications that do not adhere to party guidelines. It also reaffirmed that the Czechoslovak Army would back up the security forces in combating further demonstrations.

At an "extraordinary session" on 1 April, the party presidium gave broad authority to the Interior Ministry to arrest "the organizers" of last week's nationwide demonstrations. This is a clear bow to the Soviets, who have refused to accept the original Czechoslovak contention that the demonstrations were spontaneous.

The presidium acknowledged that it was a "mistake" not to suppress past dissidence, which it described as "antisocialist," and stated that henceforth it will take action against those who imperil Prague's alliance with Moscow.

This statement criticized the antiparty conduct of certain central committee members, including presidium member Josef Smrkovsky, the only remaining progressive in the party leadership.

The presidium also decided to crack down on the country's maverick press for "arousing...anti-Soviet hysteria." It suspended the party central committee weekly Politika for "grave political errors" and threatened action against other publications that have been circumventing censorship regulations. Two weeklies with anti-Soviet reputations which were scheduled to appear yesterday apparently

were confiscated. The party leadership even criticized its own daily, Rude Pravo, for failure to attack "views alien to socialism," and threatened to call to account "all Communist journalists."

The leadership's new crackdown is its most dramatic response to civil disturbances since the invasion, but is nevertheless, under the circumstances, a moderate first reaction. It may, however, provoke trade unionists and students, who regard Smrkovsky as the symbol of their hopes and who are united in their opposition to further administrative restrictions. Much will depend on how sternly the presidium's decisions are implemented. Wholesale arrests of those who took part in the anti-Soviet demonstrations or any punitive actions against dissidents could bring about a new crisis.

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India-Pakistan: Indian leaders are apprehensive about political developments in Pakistan but have emphasized New Delhi's policy of noninterference.

New Delhi's "hands-off" policy toward Pakistan was made explicit in a recent parliamentary statement by the foreign minister, who maintained the Pakistanis alone must decide their form of government. Although most Indian officials would probably have preferred to see Ayub remain in office with military support, their primary concern is for the emergence of a stable Pakistan, even at Ayub's expense. From the Indian viewpoint, however, military rule is an unpromising antidote for Pakistan's problems, and prevailing Indian sentiment is for the resumption of constitutional government as soon as possible.

Indian officials are particularly concerned about Rawalpindi's ability to resolve grievances in East Pakistan. Prolonged chaos there could have an unsettling effect on the neighboring Indian state of West Bengal and encourage contacts between leftist elements in that state and in East Pakistan. Further, New Delhi is concerned that substantial autonomy for East Pakistan could stimulate separatist sentiment in West Bengal where New Delhi's control has been weakened by the recent defeat of the Congress Party in state elections and the installation of a government dominated by Communists.

Indian leaders are pessimistic that significant headway will be made toward settling outstanding Indo-Pakistani issues in the next year or two. Both countries agree that slight progress was made in recently concluded bilateral talks on the long-standing problem of sharing the flow of the Ganges River, and another round of secretarial discussions on technical data is scheduled for July. New Delhi is still unwilling, however, to set a date for the ministerial-level talks for which Pakistan has been pressing. [redacted]

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Somali Republic: The Somali Youth League (SYL) party continues to control the National Assembly following the national election on 26 March.

Complete returns--subject to possible appeals by defeated candidates--gave the SYL 75 of the 123 parliamentary seats that were contested. The Socialist National Congress, a long established but relatively weak party, became the second largest party in parliament, although it won only 11 seats. The Democratic Action Party of former SYL prime minister Abdirazak, which some believed might challenge the SYL, did poorly; only Abdirazak and one other candidate were returned. The rest of the seats were scattered among a number of minor parties, many of whose deputies probably will cross over to the SYL and increase that party's majority.

It appears likely that Prime Minister Egal will be reappointed by President Scermache to form a new cabinet. The defeat of several incumbent ministers, however, probably means that Egal will need some time to complete the complicated bargaining process required to form a tribally balanced cabinet acceptable to the National Assembly. [redacted]

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Latin America: Preparatory meetings to formulate a common position on trade and development are under way.

The Special Committee for Latin American Economic Coordination (CECLA) began its "expert level" meeting in Santiago, Chile, on 31 March. CECLA is an exclusively Latin American organization which in essence is a caucus for coordinating Latin America's economic, commercial, and monetary policies for international conferences, particularly those attended by industrialized nations.

In the past, CECLA has played an influential role in unifying the Latin American position on trade and development, but it has also been used as a forum to criticize the US. During this particular meeting, US policy toward Peru will probably be discussed extensively.

The present meeting developed from the Organization of American States' desire to formulate a common position on trade and development in response to President Nixon's interest. Originally, a ministerial-level meeting was scheduled for March, but that meeting has been postponed until the outcome of the Peru-US negotiations over the International Petroleum Company is known. This preliminary meeting will last until 8 April and will prepare an agenda for the higher level meeting, which will probably take place in mid-May.

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Syria: The military-dominated Baathist regime in Damascus has apparently once again been able to meld competing factions within the party into an uneasy coalition. The new leaders of the Syrian Baath Party, who were announced on 31 March after protracted secret party meetings, are about equally divided between the two major party factions. Defense Minister Hafiz Asad, who recently became the chief power figure in the country, probably remains in control, but infighting will inevitably continue despite this week's compromise.

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Iran: Loss of production resulting from the fire at the Western oil consortium's pumping station at Gurreh will not be serious. Several emergency measures have restored the flow of crude to the Kharg Island terminal, which handles all consortium crude exports, to 90 percent of current levels. Use of a standby pumping unit and the temporary reopening of a subsidiary terminal will bring the export capacity back to the pre-fire level within a few days, and by the end of April a surplus capacity may be achieved.

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Chile: Serious trouble could break out during the next two weeks if students pursue their plans to take over university buildings and block streets in Santiago. Minister of Interior Perez Zujovic, the major proponent within the government of a hard line on law and order, plans to send police forces into the university at the slightest provocation. He particularly mentioned student attempts to occupy buildings. Any confrontation between students and police would aggravate internal problems of President Frei's Christian Democratic Party, which is currently split over the extent to which it should support demonstrators against the police.

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